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SPECIAL COMMITTEE FOR THE PREPARATION OF PLANS FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE FIFTEENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE FOURTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 30 January 1963, at 11 a.m.

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PRESENT:

Chairman:	Mrs. TREE	(United States of America)
later,	Mr. GARCIA DEL SOLAR	Argentina
Rapporteur:	Mr. DEMETROPOULOS	Greece
Members:	Mr. GARCIA DEL SOLAR	Argentina
	Mr. BARTON	Canada
	Mr. WIJEGOONAWARDENA	Ceylon
	Mr. BAYONA	Colombia
	Mr. VOLIO JIMENEZ	Costa Rica
	Mr. BOUQUIN	France
	Mr. ACHKAR	Guinea
	Mr. GOUDARZIA	Iran
	Mr. SAWAI	Japan
	Mr. RIFA'I	Jordan
	Mr. TRAORE	Mali
	Mr. LUQMAN	Mauritania
	Mr. BARCODY	Saudi Arabia
	Mr. ANUMAN-RAJADHON	Thailand
	Mr. OSTROVSKY	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
	Mr. ATTLEE	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
	Mr. MEANS	United States of America
	Mr. MARQUES SERE	Uruguay
Representatives of specialized agencies:		
	Mr. REYMOND	International Labour Organisation
	Mr. SALSAMENDI	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
Representatives of the United Nations Children's Fund:		
	Mr. GERIN	
	Mr. LING	
Secretariat:	Mr. HUMPHREY	Director, Division of Human Rights
	Mr. OBERAI	Office of Public Information
	Mr. CULPEPPER	Secretary of the Committee

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PLANS FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE FIFTEENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS (General Assembly resolution 1775 (XVII)) (ST/SG/AC.4/1-5; ST/SG/AC.4/L.1-3) (continued)

Mr. MARQUES SERE (Uruguay) said that, in carrying out its work, the Special Committee should make full use of the experience of the United Nations Secretariat and the non-governmental organizations. Although his Government was concerned with all aspects of human rights he thought that the Committee should limit its discussion to the specific task before it. The sub-committee which had been established was in the best position to examine proposals and reach concrete conclusions.

The celebration of the fifteenth anniversary of the Universal Declaration was not an end in itself but a means of strengthening the Declaration and promoting the observance of human rights. Activities in connexion with the celebration should show the progress made in regard to human rights, and illustrate the part the Declaration had played in promoting observance of those rights, the work being done in that connexion and the fields where there was still room for improvement.

The Greek representative had made an interesting suggestion about the preparation of a text explaining the steps that had been taken to give effect to the provisions of the Universal Declaration. The Soviet Union representative had urged that prominence should be given to the progress made towards the liberation of peoples, which was one aspect of the whole question of human rights. Attention should also be drawn to government efforts to promote the observance of human rights, despite the many difficulties encountered. His delegation supported the remarks of the representative of Mauritania about the use of radio; in addition to programmes broadcast by the United Nations, there should be repeated programmes on local networks. Telstar could also be a valuable medium for the transmission of information. The representative of UNESCO had made a useful suggestion about the organization of round-table discussions, for which he had suggested three possible subjects. There was therefore no lack of means for publicizing the Universal Declaration. Care should, however, be taken to see that publications

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(Mr. Marques Sere, Uruguay)

and other materials were suited to the public for whom they were intended. It was necessary to take account of varying cultural, social and economic levels as well as the existence of illiteracy. He agreed with the representative of Jordan that the celebrations should provide the occasion for positive action by Governments to improve the situation with regard to the recognition of human rights.

Mr. WIJEGOONAWARDENA (Ceylon) said that at that stage he would confine himself to making general suggestions for the guidance of the sub-committee. The most important task was to promote a wider dissemination of the message of the Universal Declaration; that could be achieved through the co-operation of Governments and organizations in Member States. His delegation believed that the fifteenth anniversary would be a suitable starting-point for such a campaign. The basic principles enshrined in the Declaration were in fact enunciated in one form or another in all the great world philosophies, but a forceful campaign was required to make their importance fully realized. If the implementation of the Declaration's provisions could be effectively promoted, the fifteenth anniversary might become a turning point in its history, so that by the twenty-fifth anniversary it would be possible to look back, not on ineffective resolutions, but on concrete achievements.

In that connexion, the possibility of the extensive use of radio should be explored. The authorities responsible for broadcasting should make plans for disseminating the message of the Declaration, which could be presented in a variety of ways. A prolonged effort was, however, required; a mere fifteen or thirty minute broadcast would not result in a sufficient awareness of the message and its implications. He hoped that the Office of Public Information would explore all possible avenues in that connexion.

Consideration might also be given to the use of State educational systems, which could incorporate a study of the Universal Declaration in their curricula. UNESCO might take the initiative in fostering such schemes.

(Mr. Wijegoonawardena, Ceylon)

Although he had confined himself to certain long-term aspects of the celebration, he hoped that the sub-committee would consider all possible methods, both long-term and short-term, of ensuring that the interest aroused was kept alive.

Mr. VOLIO JIMENEZ (Costa Rica) said that, in connexion with school activities to celebrate the fifteenth anniversary, emphasis should be placed on co-operation between information centres and local educational authorities. The different dates of school terms should be borne in mind when planning special celebrations in schools. He presumed that the suggestion regarding the preparation by non-governmental organizations of booklets to guide national organizations applied to non-governmental organizations which were active on the international and not merely on the national level. There seemed to be general agreement that the celebrations should not be too ceremonial and official in character. They should focus attention on those aspects of the Universal Declaration which had a more immediate impact and appeal and were most likely to lead to positive results. Article 2, for instance, specifically stated that the Declaration should be implemented without distinction of any kind and was therefore relevant to the problem of racial and religious discrimination. Article 17, which concerned the right to own property, might be emphasized with a view to stimulating the introduction of agrarian reforms. The implications of each article of the Declaration should be explained and people should be encouraged to find out whether any discriminatory provisions existed in the legislation applicable to themselves and in pressing for remedial action, if necessary. The United States representative had made a constructive suggestion about the creation of permanent organizations to work out ways and means of implementing the Universal Declaration. A thorough investigation of attitudes and legislation resulting in violations of human rights would lead to the elimination of such violations and would stimulate the interest of minority groups in the Declaration, which would become more than a mere document.

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Mr. GARCIA DEL MOLAR (Argentina) said that his delegation's general views were similar to those expressed by the other members of the Special Committee who represented Latin America, where there was wide-spread respect for human rights. In view of the reference to "the development of friendly relations between nations" in the preamble to the Declaration, he felt that the Special Committee should not allow its discussions to be coloured by political overtones, but should concentrate on the task in hand.

The Secretariat was to be congratulated on the quality of the suggestions it had put forward. His delegation would, however, have welcomed an evaluation of the celebrations of the tenth anniversary of the Universal Declaration, which would have indicated the effectiveness of the different activities. He suggested that the Secretariat should request Member States to report on their celebrations of the fifteenth anniversary so that such information could be used as a basis for future planning.

There would be two main channels for activities in connexion with the celebration of the fifteenth anniversary: the United Nations with its specialized agencies and the non-governmental organizations. In addition to action at Headquarters and the information centres, useful work could be done by other United Nations bodies such as the regional economic commissions. Co-operation with the specialized agencies was particularly vital; UNESCO could be very helpful, as it had national commissions in the various countries and often sub-commissions dealing specifically with human rights. The idea of round-table discussions was excellent. Planning committees should be established which could be of two types. First, there could be committees of non-governmental organizations, appointed by the Secretary-General, as suggested by the World Jewish Congress; similar committees could also be appointed by UNESCO and ILO; secondly, there could be national committees; his delegation suggested that the Commission on Human Rights should ask Governments to form such committees and report to it on the subject.

He entirely agreed with the United Kingdom representative that the quality of documentation was more important than the quantity. The most important document was the text of the Universal Declaration, which should be distributed as widely as the available funds permitted. Governments should be encouraged to print

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(Mr. Garcia del Solar, Argentina)

the text of the Declaration. Printed matter could in some cases be replaced by other means of communication, such as radio, to meet the needs of those who were illiterate. A commentary on the Universal Declaration should be prepared, as had been suggested for the tenth anniversary (Economic and Social Council resolution 651 B (XXIV), annex), should include not only the history of the Declaration but information about the Commission on Human Rights and the Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. As had been pointed out by the Consultative Council of Jewish Organizations, the work and even the very existence of the Commission were unknown in many circles. Where visual material was concerned, he would recommend the use of posters; a single type of poster should be used, perhaps the prize-winning poster, as suggested by the UNESCO representative, and should be widely distributed, especially in schools and factories. The same design could perhaps be used for the proposed stamp. Instead of re-issuing the film "Overture", it would be preferable for a new film to be prepared, possibly on the subject of racial discrimination. His delegation also welcomed the idea of round-table discussions and the idea of using Telstar. It thought that the celebration should last only one day, although, as suggested by the Office of Public Information, the number of radio and television programmes on the subject of human rights might be increased in the period immediately before the celebration. The Ceylonese delegation had rightly emphasized the need for action and concrete achievement (ST/SG/AC.4/5). A human rights decade might weaken the effectiveness of the current Development Decade but his delegation agreed that the year beginning 10 December 1963 should be declared "United Nations Year of Human Rights".

Mr. ATTLEE (United Kingdom) said that his delegation attached considerable importance to stimulating public opinion in favour of the Declaration. In that connexion, the non-governmental organizations could play an extremely important role and make practical proposals; it was therefore most regrettable that those organizations appeared to have lost interest in the work of the Special Committee.

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(Mr. Attlee, United Kingdom)

His delegation welcomed the suggestions made in document ST/SG/AC.4/L.3 and his comments on that document should be taken to imply acceptance of all suggestions not specifically mentioned. The United Kingdom delegation attached particular importance to paragraphs 5 (b) and 7 (b) and also to paragraph 8, which mentioned matters that it was essential for the Committee to consider. The date of the celebration should be 10 December 1963, in order to coincide with the proclamation of the Declaration, despite any difficulties raised by the dates of school terms. In connexion with part A, section 1, paragraph (b), of the annex to document ST/SG/AC.4/L.3, he was not in favour of declaring a United Nations Year of Human Rights, but thought that a shorter period would have more impact. He presumed that paragraph (d) was intended to cover other specialized agencies as well as UNESCO. The documentation mentioned in paragraph (f) would be useful to Governments as well as to information centres. In connexion with section 2, paragraph (a) 2, he pointed out that every year the United Kingdom Government recommended to the Queen to confer a number of honours and awards in recognition of services performed in the field of human rights. His Government supported the idea of special honours or awards in 1963 but might not itself make any special recommendations in that connexion. His delegation wondered whether it would be appropriate to hold celebrations as suggested in paragraph (a) 3, although it had no objection in principle. Nor did it object in principle to the special Parliamentary sessions mentioned in paragraph (a) 4, although it thought that the matter should be left to Parliaments themselves to decide. His delegation strongly supported the measures suggested in paragraph (a) 6. Paragraph (a) 8 was somewhat obscure; Governments should take positive action to preserve human rights but it was not certain that seminars and study programmes would have any practical results as far as implementation was concerned. His country did not need a national advisory committee but was not opposed to such bodies. All the measures proposed for non-governmental organizations deserved support. More information should be given about the nature of the pamphlet on the question of race which UNESCO was to be invited to prepare (section 3, paragraph (f)). He wondered whether it would be desirable to have a pamphlet

(Mr. Attlee, United Kingdom)

singling out one aspect of human rights. In connexion with the material to be used for the celebration, he was glad that many representatives had supported his views on the importance of quality rather than quantity of documentation.

Mr. SAISAMENDI (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) said in reply to the United Kingdom representative that UNESCO had issued a brochure entitled "The Race Concept" in connexion with the adoption by the General Conference at its fourth session of a Statement on the Nature of Race and Race Differences. That brochure could be reprinted or issued in a simplified form to mark the fifteenth anniversary of the Declaration. It had also issued ten studies dealing with the views of modern science on the question of race and a number of studies on the subject of racism and modern thought. Five more papers on race problems were to be issued for the forthcoming session of the General Conference. He did not think there would be much point in simply disseminating the Statement as such without any accompanying explanation. He was not sure whether the dissemination of the brochure he had mentioned would meet the suggestion made by the World Jewish Congress in the fourth paragraph of its communication reproduced in document ST/SG/AC.4/L.1 or whether that body had had some other idea in mind.

Mr. ACHKAR (Guinea) said that in considering the celebration of the anniversary his delegation was moved by two paramount considerations. Firstly, it was of the opinion that the domination of one people by another represented the most flagrant violation of human rights and that the Committee should therefore consider the problem of colonialism and indicate steps that could be taken to hasten its elimination. He recalled in that connexion the hope his delegation had expressed that the eighteenth anniversary of the United Nations, which, like the fifteenth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, would occur in 1963, should coincide with the end of the colonial system. In the course of the celebration it should be noted that the cause of human rights had made great strides in Africa as a result of the emancipation of many former colonies. Colonialism was to a large extent responsible for the phenomenon of racial discrimination, the other problem with which his delegation was primarily concerned. Accordingly, the same means should be used to combat both colonialism and racism. Although the United Nations could not compel any country to fulfil its obligations in the field of human rights, it could draw up a balance sheet of the gains

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(Mr. Achkar, Guinea)

made and the set-backs experienced. That could be done without attacking any country or political system as such.

He would make more detailed comments when the Committee had the results of the sub-committee's work before it. For the present he wished only to add that it was important to bear in mind the high illiteracy rate and other factors which would limit the effectiveness of the dissemination of printed matter in Africa; the use of radio and visual aids in such countries should therefore be stressed. UNESCO, the other specialized agencies, UNICEF and the Economic Commission for Africa could all play an important part in making the celebration a success in the African countries.

The CHAIRMAN observed that from the references which had been made to the work of the sub-committee, there appeared to be general agreement that its terms of reference should not be restricted to activities at the international level under United Nations auspices.

Mr. BAROODY (Saudi Arabia) said that he thought members, in discussing possible ways of celebrating the anniversary, were tending to lay too much stress on the substance of certain rights. The celebration should have two major objectives: one was to arouse public opinion in those countries and among those sectors of the population which were already aware of the work being done by the international community in the field of human rights and the other was to make that work known to the many millions throughout the world who did not realize that the United Nations was concerned with anything other than political questions. It was important in that connexion to bear in mind the differences between countries and also between different sectors of the population within countries, and to avoid making plans that some countries would be unable to carry out. For example, many speakers had stressed the role that non-governmental organizations could play, apparently overlooking the fact that such organizations were much stronger and more extensively developed in some countries than others. His own country, where the existing non-governmental organizations were mostly charitable institutions, was a case in point. As far as Governments were concerned, some had greater experience and more facilities on which to draw in carrying out certain projects than did others. The United Nations should not run the risk of irritating and perhaps even embarrassing Governments by appearing to tell them what to do, for they themselves were the best judges of their own capacities.

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(Mr. Baroody, Saudi Arabia)

Care should be exercised to avoid using terminology which would be too abstract to be universally intelligible. As other speakers had noted, radio and visual aids would be particularly useful in areas where there was wide-spread illiteracy. For the more sophisticated public a historical survey of the evolution of human rights throughout the ages might be prepared, either by the Secretariat itself or by some other agency which the Secretariat could suggest. Another measure which might prove effective would be the preparation by the Secretariat, with the co-operation of the specialized agencies, of radio programmes on the subject of human rights, perhaps including round-table discussions. A new film dramatizing the progress made by human rights should be issued. Such a film could include sequences showing the contrast between the arbitrary treatment to which individuals had been subjected in the past and their enjoyment today of the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration. He suggested ways in which several of the articles of the Declaration could be dramatized. In such a film national costumes and symbols should be avoided, for it should have universal appeal. Other ways of celebrating the anniversary might be to organize a contest for the composition of a hymn or symphony on the theme of human rights and for the best work in the field of the graphic arts or to issue postage stamps which would be subject to a special tax, as he had suggested at an earlier meeting.

The Secretariat and the specialized agencies had a wealth of knowledge and experience of an international character and it might be advisable to leave it to them to do most of the actual work of preparation.

The celebration should concentrate on activities of the type he had mentioned rather than on highlighting particular rights or violations of rights, for there was no country in the world where one human right or another was not being violated. He was second to none in his opposition to such violations of human rights as colonialism and racism but he felt that the anniversary should be marked by a universal celebration of the concept of human rights rather than by disruptive criticism.

Mr. Garcia del Solar (Argentina), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

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Mr. ATTLEE (United Kingdom) wished to say a few words on the question of colonialism for the benefit of the representative of Guinea, who had been absent from the previous meeting. He appreciated the way in which that representative had put a point of universal importance; the representative of Saudi Arabia in his brilliant statement had also set the question of colonialism in exactly the right perspective.

His Government and delegation fully realized the importance of the question and would not oppose a reference to it, provided a proper balance were maintained. As he had already pointed out, his Government was already helping the Office of Public Information in disseminating information on United Nations activities, including those relating to human rights; it had, for instance, provided for the translation into several minor African languages of the Universal Declaration, General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) and many other publications.

The remarks of the representative of Guinea were surely not directed against the Administering Powers, which were doing their utmost to lead the Territories for which they were responsible to complete independence. All those familiar with the Territories were aware that, although complete political rights might not be enjoyed in some instances, most other rights enshrined in the Declaration were respected there to a far greater extent than in many sovereign States and, particularly, in sovereign States practising concealed colonialism. That was true, for instance, of articles 13, 18, 19, 20 and 21 of the Declaration.

Mr. ACHKAR (Guinea) assured the United Kingdom representative that he had not intended to single out the colonialism of any particular country and that he was aware of the endeavours made by the United Kingdom in what remained of its colonial empire. His purpose, however, was to draw the attention of the Committee and sub-committee to the matters which first sprang to the mind of Africans in pondering the question of human rights, namely, colonialism and segregation, in that order. Racialism, as it occurred in the United States and to some extent in the United Kingdom, was evidence of failure to establish a fair and fruitful relationship based on co-operation between peoples. It would be useful if, in addition to the UNESCO publications on racism, a pamphlet were issued, demonstrating the disadvantages of

(Mr. Achkar, Guinea)

colonialism and the advantages of decolonization for present and future international relations, without specifically attacking the present policies of any country. Such a publication would be helpful both to the colonized and to the colonizers. For example, the people of Portugal were ill-informed of the nature of Portuguese colonialism and did not realize that a changed relationship with their overseas territories would not harm, but would rather promote, their country's interests.

He fully agreed with the representatives of the United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia on the need for arousing public opinion. The peoples should be made aware of the fact that while some favoured human rights, others were opposed to them. Thus the utmost would be done to promote effective and universal observance of those rights.

Mr. BOUQUIN (France) said that while the proposals in document ST/SG/AC.4/L.3 were generally sound and comprehensive, there were some points on which he wished to comment briefly. Referring to paragraph 9, he said he agreed with the United Kingdom representative that the date of the celebration should be the anniversary of the proclamation of the Universal Declaration. He also questioned the advisability of proclaiming a "United Nations Year of Human Rights" as suggested in part A, section 1, paragraph (a), of the annex.

With regard to the form of the document, he agreed with the Argentinian representative that an evaluation of the tenth anniversary celebrations would have provided useful guidance on the media to be adopted. It would also have been better to draw a distinction between international and nationsl celebrations so that assistance from non-governmental organizations could have been studied both at the international and the national level. Other activities could be contemplated. For instance, concerts might be organized in various capitals as well as at United Nations Headquarters, perhaps accompanied by an exchange of broadcasts, as had been done in the past; international round-table discussions, in whose organization UNESCO might play an important part, could also be held.

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(Mr. Bouquin, France)

Where action at the national level was concerned, the question of special sessions of Parliaments (part A, section 2, paragraph (a) 4, of the annex) was a delicate one which raised questions of constitutional procedure. In paragraph (a) 6 of the same section, a reference should be added to national and local human rights committees. Several interesting suggestions had been made concerning further ways of marking the event at the national level: the representative of Jordan had suggested the granting of amnesties to certain prisoners, the representative of Saudi Arabia the organizing of artistic competitions, and the International Federation of Free Journalists the bringing together of dispersed families. Those suggestions should be considered by the sub-commiteee.

It was suggested in part A, section 3, paragraph (d) of the annex, that UNESCO should invite museums to run human rights shows, drawing from their own collections the finest works appropriate to the Universal Declaration; however, he himself did not understand how an artistic work could illustrate the Universal Declaration; it could, on the other hand, evoke the rights and principles set forth in the text of the Declaration.

Where media was concerned, he had been struck by the number of members who had stressed the advantages of audio-visual means and had maintained that printed matter would prove ineffective as a mass medium in their countries. While agreeing that the media selected should meet local requirements, he considered that every available means must be placed at the disposal of bodies interested in the celebration.

Mr. OSTROVSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that in view of certain statements which had been made, he wished the record also to reflect the Soviet point of view. The United Kingdom representative had attempted to insinuate that the populations in British territories enjoyed all possible rights. Colonialism had, however, been roundly condemned by the United Nations and it was therefore inappropriate for the United Kingdom to attempt to suggest that the populations under its administration had benefited from colonialism and that it had granted them rights they had not previously enjoyed. He should rather have been guided by the provisions of resolutions 1514 (XV) and 1775 (XVII).

Despite his respect for the representative of Saudi Arabia, he could not agree with some of the views he had expressed. While that representative's reproach of over-ambitiousness might be correct to some extent, he was apparently

(Mr. Ostrovsky, USSR)

suggesting that the objective should merely be to acquaint all sections of the population with the Declaration. However, it was not enough to supply information about the general provisions of the Declaration or the activities of the United Nations. Public opinion should be alerted to the need to eradicate phenomena such as colonialism and fascist ideologies which involved the denial of rights of entire populations. The Saudi Arabian representative had expressed the view that the United Nations should not make recommendations, for fear of embarrassing certain Governments. Yet the whole point of mobilizing public opinion was to ensure that practical results would be achieved. That being the case, recommendations should be made. They need not, however, be addressed to any particular Government; the important thing was that they should be in keeping with the spirit of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) and the other resolutions on the subject of human rights.

Mr. ATTLEE (United Kingdom) said that if the representative of the Soviet Union were to visit the countries for which the United Kingdom was still responsible, he would find there a degree of freedom and enjoyment of human rights which would surprise him considerably.

Mr. BAROODY (Saudi Arabia) said he wished to correct any erroneous impression that had been gained by the Soviet representative. The Committee's function was not to discuss the substance of human rights, but to undertake the specific task of planning for the fifteenth anniversay celebration. The Soviet representative had reproached him with failing to touch on many aspects of human rights. He had, however, made it clear that he would confine himself to highlighting certain approaches, leaving others to be considered by the sub-committee, and he had explicitly stated that some human rights should not be stressed at the expense of others. Moreover, his long record in the fight against colonialism was well known. Violations of human rights such as colonialism, racialism and discrimination were more eloquent than anything that might be said in the United Nations.

Once the peoples concerned were fully aware of their rights, they would know what to do. However, to incite them to violence instead of giving them hope and an example would be wrong. The present world was no Utopia and one

(Mr. Baroody, Saudi Arabia)

right or another was constantly being violated in almost every country. However, with constant endeavour, it should prove possible in time to improve the human race and it was the duty of all to strive unceasingly towards that end.

The meeting rose at 3.30 p.m.